

## CLAIMS

- 1 1. A method comprising  
2 enabling a party to a negotiation to create a document  
3 containing text, typed data, and formulas configured to generate  
4 optional texts,  
5 enabling a party to the negotiation to manipulate the  
6 document as a hierarchically structured set of containers, and  
7 permitting a party to view protected portions of the document only  
8 upon presentation of a cipher key associated with those portions.
- 1 2. A method comprising  
2 enabling a party to a negotiation to create a document  
3 containing text, typed data, and formulas configured to generate  
4 optional texts,  
5 enabling a party to the negotiation to manipulate the  
6 document as a hierarchically structured set of containers, and  
7 maintaining a version history of portions of the document  
8 sufficient to enable a user to view and display changes between  
9 successive versions of the document.
- 1 3. A method comprising

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2 enabling a party to a negotiation to create a document  
3 containing text, typed data, and formulas configured to generate  
4 optional texts,

5 enabling a party to the negotiation to add annotations to the  
6 document, and

7 maintaining a version history of portions of the document  
8 sufficient to enable a user to view and display changes between  
9 successive versions of the document.

1 4. A method comprising

2 enabling a party to a negotiation to create a document  
3 containing text, typed data, and formulas configured to generate  
4 optional texts,

5 enabling a party to the negotiation to manipulate the  
6 document as a hierarchically structured set of containers,

7 permitting a party to view protected portions of the  
8 document only upon presentation of a cipher key associated with  
9 those portions, and

10 maintaining a version history of portions of the document  
11 sufficient to enable a user to view and display changes between  
12 successive versions of the document.

1 5. A method comprising

2 enabling a party to the negotiation to create a document  
3 containing text, typed data, and formulas configured to generate  
4 optional texts,

5 enabling a party to the negotiation to manipulate the  
6 document as a hierarchically structured set of containers,

7 enabling a party to a negotiation to add annotations to the  
8 document,

9 permitting a party to view protected portions of the  
10 document only upon presentation of a cipher key associated with  
11 those portions, and maintaining a version history of portions of the  
12 document sufficient to enable a user to view and display changes  
13 between successive versions of the document.

1 6. The method of claim 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, also including

2 transmitting a state and history of the negotiation from user  
3 to user using a network communication protocol.

1 7. The method of claim 6 in which the protocol includes e-  
2 mail, client-server file transfer, or peer-to-peer file transfer.

1 8. Apparatus comprising a medium on which are stored  
2 data structures capable of configuring a machine to enable  
3 a negotiation of a document, the data structures comprising

4 linked discrete elements, each of the linked  
5 elements having value binding and formula features,  
  
6 each of the elements being linked into a hierarchical  
7 structure,  
  
8 each of the linked elements having annotation  
9 features,  
  
10 the data structures being expressed in a serialized  
11 data format that represents content of the linked discrete  
12 elements encrypted separately for each group of users able  
13 to access parts of the document,  
  
14 the content of linked discrete elements being  
15 associated with a version history capable of configuring a  
16 machine to render complete document versions, and  
  
17 software capable of configuring the machine to  
18 enable a user to create the document, edit the document by  
19 adding new versions, attach messages, add, remove and  
20 change the access rights of users with respect to individual  
21 document elements, compare and merge documents, and  
22 purge version histories.

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